

state through a Recreation and Public Purposes lease for the operation of a camping area and trail system. Cave Lake State Park will also receive a conveyance of land to help improve management of that site, although the exact boundaries of this designation have not yet been finalized. This park is exceptionally popular, receiving nearly 100,000 visitors each year, most of which are from southern Nevada.

In addition to expanding these two State parks, this bill conveys roughly 6,200 acres to the State of Nevada for an expansion of the Steptoe Valley Wildlife Management Area. The State acquired the 3C Ranch in 1999 and now manages it as the Steptoe Valley Wildlife Management Area. The conveyance of BLM land to this popular hunting and bird watching area will maximize management options while also creating a safety buffer between hunters and future residential and commercial development.

Further, our legislation makes two small but important conveyances to provide for the future economic growth of White Pine County. These include up to 200 acres for the expansion of the White Pine County Industrial Park and up to 1,500 acres for the planned expansion of the White Pine County Airport. The county has been working with the Federal Aviation Administration on this airport expansion for a number of years. When completed, it will allow larger jets to land at the airport, further expanding the economic reach of White Pine County. The conveyance also allows for the airport to expand and accommodate additional business tenants. Any funds collected from the lease, sale or conveyance of either the industrial park or airport lands will be directed for public uses.

Building on the designation of the Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail in Lincoln County, this bill authorizes a 3-year study for a possible extension of the trail into and through White Pine County. If the Secretary of Interior, working with local citizens and other stakeholders, is able to identify a route for the trail that would not significantly impact wildlife, natural or cultural resources, an extension of the Silver State Trail will be designated at the conclusion of the study.

Off-highway vehicle use in Nevada has grown exponentially in recent years, and this rise in use has led to the pioneering of hundreds of miles of additional trails and roads across Nevada's frontier. The longer this uncontrolled use continues, the fewer areas we will have in Nevada that are truly wild and untouched. And when these places are gone, we will have lost something that cannot be replaced.

With this in mind, the study authorized by this bill is an effort to recognize that the use of off-highway vehicles is a popular form of recreation that is here to stay. Many people use their off-highway vehicles responsibly and we are creating a process with this legislation that will put advocates for

off-highway vehicles, wildlife, grazing and other land users around the same table.

Perhaps no issue addressed by this legislation has been more discussed and debated than the conveyance of BLM land to be held in trust by the United States for the Ely Shoshone Tribe. Currently, the tribe holds 100 acres in two separate parcels within the city limits of Ely. For 3 years meetings have been taking place in White Pine County to discuss possible configurations and areas for a tribal expansion. Local residents and interested parties have expressed strong feelings on all sides of this issue, and our proposal is better as a result of this dialog.

This bill transfers roughly 3,500 acres in four separate parcels into trust for the benefit of the Ely Shoshone Tribe. Over half of this acreage is contained in one parcel to the west of Ward Mountain. This large area is designated exclusively for traditional tribal uses, such as ceremonial celebrations and gatherings and pine nut picking.

The conveyance also includes two parcels to the south of Ely and one approximately 10 miles north of McGill on highway 93. These lands are available to be used by the tribe for residential and commercial purposes.

The placement of these conveyances will allow the tribe to be a partner in the growth and economic development of White Pine County while also ensuring that the city of Ely has sufficient room to grow south along highway 93. We have taken special care to ensure that existing developments, like the KOA, have room to expand.

This conveyance represents a tough compromise between many important interests. Some have proposed that the tribe should receive in excess of 20,000 acres of land in and around Ely. Others have fought to block the tribe from receiving a single acre. We do not expect that the conveyance in this bill will please anyone completely, but we do believe it is a fair compromise that addresses the main concerns of all the concerned parties.

The invasion of non-native species like cheat grass and red brome and the overgrowth of pinon and juniper woodlands has begun to fundamentally alter the ecosystems in eastern Nevada. This landscape level change threatens to bring catastrophic fire to this area while also destroying essential habitat for many of Nevada's native species.

In order to address the challenges, this legislation makes funds from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act special account available for the implementation of the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project in White Pine and Lincoln Counties. In addition to funding this vital program, we have authorized the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to work with Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition and the Great Basin Institute in carrying out the landscape-scale restoration efforts necessary to restore the health of eastern Nevada's range-

lands. In the interest of understanding and fully addressing the ecosystem changes that are taking place all across the Great Basin, this bill also authorizes a feasibility study for an interagency research facility and experimental rangeland in eastern Nevada.

In addition to preventing major and repeated fires, this restoration initiative will benefit ranchers, sportsmen, private land owners, communities of all sizes, and of course the wildlife and rangelands on which we depend. It is my sincere hope that this program will make a long lasting and beneficial change in the health of the ecosystems in eastern Nevada.

Since the passage of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, SNPLMA, in 1998, thousands of acres of BLM land have been auctioned in southern Nevada. These sales have produced significant funding for conservation efforts, enhancements to our most prized public lands, and the acquisition of sensitive lands throughout our State.

Now, 8 years after its passage, we are seeking to update the legislation so that it continues to serve the full interests of the people of Nevada, our public lands, and the federal agencies that administer the programs funded by the original legislation.

In this bill we provide funding for two separate 10-year hazardous fuels reduction programs, one for the Spring Mountains and one for the Lake Tahoe Basin including the adjacent lands in the Carson Range in Washoe and Douglas Counties and Carson City. We also provide funding for the implementation of the Clark County Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan, allow SNPLMA to be used for improvements to state parks in Clark County, authorize reimbursement for water saving landscaping undertaken by public institutions, and make the Clean Water Coalition eligible for funding to implement an essential wastewater project that will improve the water quality in Lake Mead and provide a sustainable future for the Las Vegas Wash.

In order to make SNPLMA more manageable for the agencies and municipalities that administer the special account and its many programs, we have included authority that allows all federal agencies that carry out SNPLMA projects to get reimbursed for their direct costs. We have also provided an important authority for the BLM to use SNPLMA funds to properly clear and protect vacant parcels in the Las Vegas Valley from dumping. The current practice of providing funding for approved projects only through reimbursement is also brought to an end. Under this legislation the Department of Interior is required to distribute funds for approved SNPLMA projects no later than 60 days after a transfer of funds is requested.

Of special note, these amendments also include a 5-year authorization for Washoe County to acquire up to 250